

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5546

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 13239

FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SWEL, MOPS, VE, US

SUBJECT: THE FAV C-130 CRASH - FOREIGN POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

REF: CARACAS 12670

1. REFTEL PROVIDES A SUMMARY OF CURRENT INFORMATION REGARDING THE C-130 CRASH. GIVEN FAV SENSITIVITY AND ITS APPARENT RELUCTANCE TO ACKNOWLEDGE CREW ERROR AS THE PRIMARY CAUSE OF THE CRASH AND THE PUBLIC AND OFFICIAL PERCEPTION OF THE GESTURE AS A HUMANITARIAN ONE (SEE ESPECIALLY PARA 3 OF REFTEL), WE BELIEVE THAT TO PRESENT A BILL (ESTIMATED AT ABOUT \$30,000) TO THE FAV FOR THE COST OF THE AIRLIFT OPERATION WOULD HAVE A DELETERIOUS EFFECT ON OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. THE FACT THAT THE USG HAD INSISTED THAT THE GOV AGREE TO PAY ALL COSTS AS A PREREQUISITE TO OUR PERFORMING THE MISSION WOULD PROBABLY BECOME PUBLIC, WITH AN ADVERSE MEDIA, GOV AND PUBLIC REACTION WHICH WOULD UNDO THE GOODWILL WE HAVE RECEIVED SO FAR FROM THE AIRLIFT OPERATION. WE WOULD, IN SHORT, RISK WOUNDING VENEZUELAN PRIDE, PROVIDE REINFORCEMENT TO THE FAV OFFICIALS WHO WISH TO
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PLACE PARTIAL BLAME FOR THE CRASH ON THE USAF,

AND CREATE AN UNDESIRABLE AND UNNECESSARY FOREIGN
RELATIONS PROBLEM FOR US.

2. GIVEN THE FOREGOING, THEREFORE, I STRONGLY
RECOMMEND THAT THE USG NOT RPT NOT PRESENT A BILL
FOR THE AIRLIFT TO THE GOV, AND THAT STATE AND DEFENSE
CONSULT WITH A VIEW TO RESOLVING THE QUESTION OF
PAYMENT. I REALIZE THAT THE ORIGINAL DECISION TO ASK
THE GOV FOR REIMBURSEMENT WAS BASED ON THE DIFFICULTY
OF JUSTIFYING A FREE RIDE TO OIL-RICH VENEZUELA.
MY POINT IS, THAT OTHER CONSIDERATIONS HAVE NOW
INTRUDED WHICH JUSTIFY THE EXPENSE FROM THE STANDPOINT
OF OUR OWN INTERESTS. I MUST ASK, THEREFORE, THAT
STATE AND DEFENSE TRY TO FIND SOME WAY TO DEFRAID THE
EXPENSE INVOLVED.
VAKY

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